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FOR SA/PAB, SA/PPD (LSCENSNY, SSTRYKER), SA/RA, INR/R/MR,
AND PASS TO USAID FOR ANE/ASIA/SA/B (WJOHNSON)

CINCPAC FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ADVISOR, J51 (MAJ TURNER), J45
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TAGS: [KMDR](#) [OIIP](#) [OPRC](#) [KPAO](#) [PREL](#) [ETRD](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [BG](#) [OCII](#)
SUBJECT: Media Reaction: State Department's Report on
Bangladesh; Dhaka

Summary: Two opposition Bangla newspapers criticize the
Bangladesh government for the worsening human rights
situation as mentioned in the U.S. State Department report.
Editorials asked the government to improve its performance,
instead of blaming the opposition.

State Department's Report on Bangladesh

"Investigation into Political Violence"

Pro-opposition Bangla language newspaper "Janakantha"
editorially comments (4/1):

Grenade attacks in Bangladesh are all politically motivated.
The government has failed to investigate into these
politically motivated attacks. This has been said in the
U.S. report "Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S.
Records 2004-05". The report also said that extra-judicial
killings are occurring in Bangladesh. NGO workers and
religious minorities are subjected to attacks. The report
clearly said that violence is a usual feature of politics in
Bangladesh.

What the report said is not hidden from the public. People
know this. Even those who are in power and strongly deny
know that this is true. Previously, the government would
not have acknowledged that grenade attacks were politically
motivated. After the murder of Kibria and with
international pressure, the investigation that has so far
been carried out revealed that the ruling party activists
were involved in it

These attacks are occurring because there is a government
inside the government. As a result, perpetrators escape
easily and investigations into the incidents lose track
midway. After the U.S. report, the government may repeat
like a parrot that the report is the result of the
activities of those who are out to undermine the image of
the country. This may help them stop street politics, but
what about the fact that Bangladesh is becoming friendless.
How could one hope that the modern world will continue to
have relations with a country that is silently giving birth
to fundamentalism?

"The U.S. State Department Report and Bangladesh"
Pro-Opposition Bangla language newspaper "Sangbad"
editorially comments (4/1):

The U.S. State Department, in a report to Congress, said
that Bangladesh's poor human rights situation has become
more fragile. Citing some indices, the report "Supporting
Human Rights and Democracy -- The U.S. Records 2004-2005"
said that the situation worsened further with the abuse of
power, extra-judicial killings, discrimination and violence
against women, corruption, detention, lack of freedom of
speech, restrictions on political rallies and interference
in religious freedoms.

There is no way to disagree with the U.S. State Department
report. Bangladesh's newspapers have been publishing these
incidents every day. The government has always denied that
the situation is deteriorating and, without improving the
situation, it has put the responsibility for these incidents
on the opposition.

Will the government again say that the U.S. State Department
has prepared the report as dictated by the opposition?

There is a little scope for this, since the U.S. State
Department has said that a U.S. Cell on Democracy and Human
Rights has been working in Bangladesh to strengthen
democratic institutions, bring transparency, improve human
rights and ensure accountability to the people. After the
August 21 grenade attack on Awami League Chief Sheikh
Hasina, the U.S. Embassy has been demanding an expeditious
and fair investigation into the incident. But that did not
work. The U.S. Embassy also emphasized identifying the
perpetrators of the attack on former President Badruddoza
Chowdhury. It made similar requests to the Bangladesh
government after the murder of former Finance Minister

Kibria.

The Bangladesh government has only investigated the murder of Kibria. Therefore, there is no reason to believe that the government will be able to escape responsibility by blaming the opposition or the attitude of donors for the situation. The only task before the government is to improve its performance, instead of blaming the opposition. If it can do that, governance, human rights situation and democratic and political image may improve and get approval at home and abroad. Otherwise, the situation will not only worsen, but also invite more donors' comments and as the Prime Minister has said more "interference or dictates." Does the alliance government want that?

Thomas